

Hello, I am Ervin Carlson, President of the InterTribal Buffalo Council and a member of the Blackfeet Tribe.

ITBC is a national organization comprised of 56 Tribes across 19 States and every Tribe in Montana is a member of the organization.

For over 20 years, ITBC has worked to restore buffalo to Indian lands to re-establish the sacred relationship between buffalo and Indian people. Through our efforts, ITBC collectively manages the largest number of buffalo in the United States. We serve as the Indian voice on buffalo protection, management and conservation issues.

ITBC has been diligently working with the NPS and State Agencies toward relocation of the buffalo to Indian lands – to preserve genetics and provide a sound management option for the surplus Yellowstone buffalo, rather than potential needless killing.

It is from this perspective that I am here today as an opponent of HB 396.

First, passing this bill would result in violations of tribal sovereignty because it authorizes Local Counties to regulate Montana Tribes who are working on repopulating their lands with buffalo. The impact on the economic, social, and cultural welfare of Montana Tribes would be significant if local counties bar them from receiving Buffalo from the State. Specifically, it would completely undermine the agreement between the State and the Fort Peck Tribes which took three years to negotiate. The bill obviously was developed without any attempt to consult with Montana Tribes.

Second, this Bill runs contrary to the State's role in the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP). In effect, it strips the authority of the two main agencies responsible for Montana's end of the IBMP and places it directly into the hands of Boards of County Commissioners.

Third, Proper management of commerce, disease, and wildlife statutes rightly belongs in the hands of experts at the state level. This bill was already considered and denied in the 2011 Legislature. HB 318 was identical to the Bill being discussed today. It was not passed due to concerns that it shifted the current management of bison from a scientific risk-based criteria system that the State

